



North Carolina

## Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

### Introduction to the North Carolina Birding Trail – Mountain Region

Welcome to the mountain region of the North Carolina Birding Trail (NCBT)! This on-line guide<sup>1</sup> presents the traveler with 105 birding sites, organized into 18 groups across the North Carolina mountains, the region west of Interstate 77. Each group is complete with a map and includes a site description for each birding destination within the group. While the groups have been designed to cluster sites that are within easy travel distances of one another, it is not necessary to travel the NCBT in any particular order. Directions to each site are given from the nearest major state or federal highway.

**Before you visit...** Be sure to review the following list of useful tips to make your travels more enjoyable.

1. Plan to provide your own food and drink while visiting sites along the Trail. Few sites provide concessions. In addition, some rural areas may have limited services, such as gas stations and restaurants, so plan accordingly.
2. Plan ahead to visit sites that require advanced permission, a ferry ride, or that are boat access only.
3. Check the Carolina Bird Club's Rare Bird Alert web site ([www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org)) for rare bird sightings and be sure to study up on the birds of North Carolina.
4. Consult birding resources ahead of time to optimize your chances of seeing seasonal target species. The key to successful birding is being in the right place at the right time of year.
5. Some sites support not only great birds, but also biting insects and the occasional venomous snake. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear and be sure to pack insect repellent and sunscreen.
6. Plan for variable weather and dress accordingly.
7. Be aware that some publicly owned lands are open to hunting during certain times of the year. *Review the Hunting Areas inset below.*

**Hunting Areas:** On all public Game Lands, and in some national forests, national wildlife refuges, and other state-owned lands, birders must be aware of hunting seasons and regulations and should consult the most current version of the North Carolina Inland Fishing, Hunting, and Trapping Regulations Digest before visiting. Other useful Game Lands resources include the Special Permit Hunts book and the Game Lands Map Book. These books are usually available where hunting and fishing licenses are sold. Or visit [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org) to request such information. Sunday visitation of Game Lands is encouraged during hunting seasons as Sunday hunting is currently prohibited on Game Lands in North Carolina.

**Paddle Trails:** If paddling on a North Carolina Birding Trail site, be sure to observe safe paddling techniques. Carry and use necessary safety gear for the outing. Visit the NC Paddle Trails Association web site ([www.ncpaddletrails.org](http://www.ncpaddletrails.org)) for more paddle trail information.

<sup>1</sup> The same information will be included in the hard copy guide we are currently producing, which will be the third and final of three regional NCBT guides (coastal plain, piedmont, mountains). We anticipate that the guide should be available by summer 2009. The hard copy publication will also include photos and other useful information about community attractions you'll find along the way.

**Local community and business support** - Successful birding trails also provide economic development opportunities for the local communities that host visiting birders. Following are some tips on how you can encourage local community and business support for the NCBT:

1. Educate local businesses and communities about the importance of birding areas.
2. Support communities and businesses displaying the "Birder Friendly" logo.
3. Leave "Birder Calling Cards" at local establishments to identify yourself at the places you patronize.
4. Be friendly and courteous to local residents.

**Other birding resources** - Consult the following books or web sites for additional information about birding sites in the North Carolina piedmont.

- *Birds of the Blue Ridge Mountains*, Marcus B. Simpson, Jr. 1992. The University of North Carolina Press.
- *Birding North Carolina*, edited by Marshall Brooks and Mark Johns. 2005. Falcon Guide, The Globe Pequot Press.
- *Birding NC State Parks*, edited by Karen Bearden. 2002. Audubon North Carolina.
- *North Carolina Wildlife Viewing Guide*, Charles E. Roe. 1992. Falcon Press.
- The Carolina Bird Club: [www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org)
- Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society: [www.main.nc.us/emas](http://www.main.nc.us/emas)
- High Country Audubon Society: [www.geocities.com/hcaudubon](http://www.geocities.com/hcaudubon)
- Highlands Plateau Audubon Society: [www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org](http://www.highlandsaudubonsociety.org)

**Top viewing techniques** - Use the following techniques to maximize your opportunities to view birds in a natural setting while minimizing disturbance to the birds or their habitats.

1. Study your field guide ahead of time to familiarize yourself with the species in an area.
2. Scan for movement; move slowly and quietly.
3. Use a viewing blind and take advantage of natural cover.
4. Wear clothing that blends with the surroundings – *except* during hunting seasons, when blaze orange is a safety must.
5. Locate birds with your eyes, then focus in using binoculars, a scope, or a photo lens.
6. Listen for bird calls and songs; many birds will be detected by ear before they can be spotted by sight.
7. Leave your pets at home to reduce disturbance.

**Respect the resources** - Please use the following guidelines when visiting sites along the NCBT<sup>2</sup>.

1. Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any rare species.
2. Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. Respect all posted signs, fencing, and instructions.
3. Do not feed or bait any wildlife.
4. Stay on existing roads, trails, and paths where possible; keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.
5. Respect the law and the rights of others. Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
6. Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas.
7. Close gates and leave areas as you found them.
8. Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.
9. Be aware that some publicly owned lands are open to hunting during certain times of the year. See above for more about Hunting Areas.







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<sup>2</sup> For more information, review the American Birding Association's Principles of Birding Ethics (<http://americanbirding.org>).

## Key to Symbols

	Boat access only
	Boat launch
	Camping
	Fee
	Handicap access
	Hiking trails
	Hunting
	Interpretive programs
	Picnic area
	Restroom
	Trail maps/information
	Viewing platform
	Visitor center

## Map Legend

	Interstate Highway
	US Highway
	NC Highway
	NC Birding Trail site
	Managed public land**
	Municipality

\*\*These lands include National Forests, National Seashores, National Wildlife Refuges, State Game Lands, State Parks, or other federal or state- owned lands.

Latitude (N) and longitude (W) coordinates are indicated for the parking area or entrance (in degrees, minutes, seconds). FR is the abbreviation for Forest Road.

## Pay special attention to...

Be sure to review site descriptions in advance of your visit so that you can plan for any special considerations, including sites that:

1. Require advanced notice or are by-appointment-only,
2. Charge an entrance fee or have limited access hours,
3. Allow hunting - see page 1 for more about Hunting Areas, or
4. Are boat access only.